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Moving from commitments to results: transforming public institutions to facilitate inclusive policy formulation and integration in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals

Inclusive policy formulation and integration in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals

Note by the Secretariat

The paper entitled "Inclusive policy formulation and integration in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals", prepared by Margaret Saner, member of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, taking into account contributions by Committee members Meredith Edwards and Rowena Bethel, is hereby transmitted in accordance with the provisional annotated agenda of the fifteenth session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (see E/C.16/2016/1). The content of and the views expressed in the paper are those of the author and do not imply any expression of opinion on the part of the United Nations.

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Inclusive policy formulation and integration in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals

Summary

The ability to function effectively in a process of integration is a critical success factor in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and fundamentally important to the pledge that no one will be left behind. The author points out that policy formulation skills are largely unseen by the general public but policy incoherence often underlies citizens' perception of obstacles and inconsistencies in a government's approach, whether it is in relation to services that directly affect them or in broader areas of policy- and decision-making.

There are likely to be challenges in the policymaking process itself, from problem definition through prioritizing and assessing the impact of policy proposals. Then further challenges in addressing integration issues vertically, through tiers of government or through deep knowledge of a specific topic; and also in addressing horizontal integration whether focused on whole-of-government issues, across tiers of government or across international boundaries.

The present paper builds on previous work undertaken by the Committee on this subject, recalling that to address the interrelated dimensions of sustainable development, a new approach is needed. It draws on academic and practitioner contributions with a view to stimulating discussion and reflection on the effectiveness of current approaches to policymaking and the extent to which they are capable of rising to the challenge of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Conclusions from all these sources are consistent with each other although the emphasis may differ.

I. Introduction

1. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration has frequently alluded to policy development and policy integration challenges in its reports, most particularly in connection with its fourteenth session, at which the issue was discussed at length (see E/2015/44, chap. III.B, sect. 3). Recognition of the value and benefits of policy integration have grown in tandem with increasing understanding of the impact of globalization and the interconnectedness of countries and societies. As with any evolving process, deficits and gaps have also been identified; as have differences in approach and desired goals.

2. Uniquely, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see General Assembly resolution 70/1) sets out goals to which all Member States have agreed, which have a durability beyond competing political perspectives and which apply to all. It refers to the Sustainable Development Goals as integrated and indivisible, and formally recognizes the need to go beyond separate, sectoral, policymaking and call for action based on inter-connectedness, both in terms of goals and international approaches. The ability to function effectively in a process of integration is a critical success factor in the implementation of the goals, it is also fundamentally important to the pledge that no one will be left behind.

3. The 2030 Agenda also acknowledges respect for the individual policy space of Member States. Every country will have its own priorities and decisions to make about where to take action and how to allocate resources. The variation and the challenge is in making the transition, indeed the transformation, from the current state, whatever it may be, to the desired state as envisaged by the goals. Some countries will perceive themselves as being close to the goals. Others may believe they have a long way to travel, while some countries may not be clear where they stand. All this is perception and/or assumption until such time as baseline data is agreed, and indeed available, so that countries are using a common language.

II. Policy development concepts and terminology

4. "Policy" as a term is widely, but not universally, used in many countries and what is understood in practice by the term policy development varies considerably. Policy can be interpreted as choices or decisions made by government and is addressed in the present paper in this context. Policy and governance issues are inextricably linked since accountability for the allocation and use of resources and the impact and effectiveness of choices made by governments are the basis of an administration's responsibility for public expenditure and the trust placed in them by the citizen.

5. This linkage, however, is not universally found: choices made by administrations can be influenced by a variety of factors, some of which are explored in the present paper. Not all decisions are transparent and/or based on a rational assessment of evidence: and decisions about priorities, selection of solutions, etc., can be made on the basis of inadequate information, misunderstanding of the issue and/or be subject to blinkered or at worst biased self-interest. Effective policy development and integration, in as much as they are one aspect of effective governance, can support value-for-money decisions, prevent corruption and support transparency in government operations.

6. By developing skills and methodology in the policy field, administrations can reduce the risk of costly failures, unintended consequences and dissatisfied members of the public. There will likely always remain an element of risk but many negative consequences can be prevented by effective policy development and implementation. In today's world, this means dealing effectively with issues at the international, national and local levels.

Towards a common understanding

7. Various writers, organizations and Member States have developed language around the policy process. This has ranged from expressions such as "cross-government working" and "horizontal policy development", through "policy coordination", "policy integration" to "policy cohesion", the latter perhaps being found more frequently in an international context and tending to imply the bringing closer of national policies, e.g., in the context of global concerns such as climate change and maritime issues. There is, however, a sense in which policy integration is fundamentally about bringing coherence to national and local policies and indeed between national and local policies.

8. Academic writers have sought to tease out definitions of the various expressions in use. For example, Meijers and Stead (2004:1)[1] offer a policy integration definition: "Policy integration concerns the management of cross-cutting issues in policy-making that transcend the boundaries of established policy fields, which often do not correspond to the institutional responsibilities of individual departments." Other terms include "policy coherence", "cross-cutting policymaking", "holistic government", "joined-up government" and "policy coordination".

9. Integrated policymaking "refers to both horizontal sectoral integration (between different departments and/or professions in public authorities) and vertical intergovernmental integration in policymaking (between different tiers of government) or combinations of both." Meijers and Stead distinguish cooperation from coordination from collaboration and finally from integration.

10. From a practitioner's perspective, policy integration means change at a more fundamental level than simply sharing policy intent and scrutinizing proposals across government with a view to avoiding potential conflicts. For those experienced in efforts to achieve integration and/or cohesion, it means a way of working together that is a process, which is significantly different from what might be described as traditional policymaking.

The importance of process

11. Practitioners have found that just as agreeing clear goals and desired outcomes is vital to success, so is a shared understanding and commitment to the process of integration and desire to achieve mutually supportive policies. Early efforts to reach beyond coordination towards integration were often driven by the experience of improving service for customers because by examining services from the customers' perspectives, contradictions and complications in policies were revealed. Local government often has first-hand experience of poorly thought-through policies since

[1] Evert Meijers and Dominic Stead, "Policy integration: what does it mean and how can it be achieved? A multi-disciplinary review", paper presented at the Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, Berlin, 3 and 4 December 2004.

it is when policies are passed to the local level for implementation that the problems begin to show.

12. The 2030 Agenda addresses this need to develop a new approach to process in as much as it combines both policy goals and process goals. It recognizes that operational detail has yet to be fully worked out but sets out clear parameters such as are found in Sustainable Development Goal targets 17.13 to 17.15, in paragraph 63, and in the section on follow-up and review.

13. The term "policy" is usually used in a proactive sense, that is, to indicate an intentional choice or desired result. It may apply to the desired end result or to the means adopted to achieve the result. Choices and therefore decisions may be made after a long period of enquiry, consultation and weighing of options or in minutes or days in the event of a crisis or unexpected event. Policy decisions made on the spur of the moment without prior analysis and with limited information run the risk of greater unforeseen negative consequences.

14. A further complication is that individual choices and decisions, made by for instance individual ministries, may conflict with each other or, combined, produce an unintended result. To the public, this emergent and to them, incoherent, policy may be seen as an intention to create confusion, uncertainty or as a deliberate detriment to one group in society, for example, as evidenced by the barriers facing unemployed young people seeking work. The reality may be simply a failure to coordinate policy decisions and to look at the problem as a whole, from a variety of perspectives: an oversight rather than a conspiracy.

Integration and effective governance

15. Policy equates to choices, to decisions. Policy can be proactive and determined. It may also be emergent, in response to circumstances, events, beliefs and values, or even simply based on the ideology of the government of the day. These choices, particularly when resources are attached to them, impact on the public, hence the importance of the democratic process. There are, moreover, variations as to how much weight is given to the public view, and varying systems for reaching decisions at the national and local levels.

16. Self-determination by those in power is regulated by national and international law and convention. There are potential benefits to all countries in ensuring that their own policymaking is effective, i.e., in basing priorities and decisions on realistic information and analysis with a view to at least mitigating, if not fully resolving, a policy challenge. Beyond national benefits, participation with others as part of an integration process is then built on firm foundations. Confidence in each other's capability of backing up a commitment is likely to facilitate international policymaking and negotiated agreements.

Types of integration

17. It is now recognized that policy challenges to be resolved do not come in neatly organized parcels that respect organizational structures and boundaries. They probably never did, but prior to the advent of globalization, it was just about possible to segregate issues into fairly tightly defined categories.

18. Since the late 1990s, the discussion has been about complexity, meaning the interrelated nature of many policy challenges both thematically and geographically.

Within a country there can be relationships between, for example, policies on youth, education, employment, housing, crime, economic productivity, and gender, all of which can spill over into international challenges such as migration.

19. While many recognize the interconnected nature of such concerns at an intellectual level, it has not proved easy to convert this understanding into the actual process of policy formulation. Many countries still operate organizational processes and structures which reinforce sectoral approaches. Cross-government knowledge and information-sharing is not universal. Policy integration may be vertical and/or horizontal.

20. Vertical integration may comprise in-depth appreciation and evidence-based knowledge of a sector, e.g., agriculture or education, or of a particular topic, such as drug abuse or taxation. Further, there is vertical integration with respect to implementation mechanisms such as tiers of government or contracted-out services which ensures that policy is implemented as intended through all the channels involved. For instance, a central ministry may take the lead in a policy development process but it will be implemented through regional or local government or by third parties such as private sector organizations or the voluntary sector.

21. Horizontal linkages occur between related sectors, e.g., health and agriculture, or education and employment. They also occur with respect to thematic issues such as youth offending or infant mortality. It is the increasing realization of the importance of these horizontal linkages that has led in recent years to the focus on cross-government working and/or the multi-stakeholder approach, so that there is now an appreciation that the connections go beyond the obvious. As an example, a rise in youth offending might previously have been connected with unemployment but would now be examined in the light of education, housing, policing and sentencing, as well as perhaps discrimination, parenting and health.

22. Both vertical and horizontal policy integration increasingly have a global dimension in as much as international law, agreements and conventions impact on national policy.

III. Current approaches to policy development

Decision-making

23. Mechanisms for decision-making vary around the globe for reasons which include contexts, cultures, constitutions and crises. Even within long-established models there can be tension within government, often across sectoral boundaries. Tension can also result from differences found in professional and academic fields, in political aims and across geographical boundaries, even though, for example countries may be part of a trading group or economic area.

24. Over the last 20 years or so many countries have adopted strategic planning approaches which, if fully embraced, identify a clear vision for the future, create an in-depth understanding of the current state, constraints and necessary improvements or critical success factors for achieving the vision. Achieving a reasonably accurate understanding of the current position in order to begin planning for arriving at the desired position is crucial; not only in the international context but in a national and local context so that policy proposals are based on evidence not assumption.

25. It is only when there is a genuine and realistic appreciation of capability and current position that appropriate interventions can be made. This requires reliable, relevant data and the ability to analyse and interpret it. It is vital to have the capability to quality assure research and data so that policy proposals are not based on weak or selective science or statistics.

26. Of course elected representatives/political decision-makers, often do have their own ideas and solutions and may have been elected on a particular platform. This may be borne out of long-held values or out of an immediate compelling problem, perhaps as presenting in their constituency. Their preferred solution, if robust, having been evolved through a credible policy process, should withstand scrutiny.

Problem solving

27. A key element of the policy process is problem solving. This necessitates accurately understanding the true nature of the problem, deciding how best to solve, or at least mitigate, the problem and taking action to that end. For this reason a policy is not a policy until it is implemented. Passing legislation may be a necessary step but it is not a successfully implemented "policy" unless it is effective in dealing with the problem.

28. Once a problem is identified, a government generally has the choice of ignoring it, intervening directly or encouraging others to deal with it, e.g., the markets. "Doing nothing" is a policy decision. When the decision is to intervene, the options usually centre on regulation with enforcement or penalties, incentives, or influencing, e.g., public campaigns such as those against smoking. In some cases a mix of all three will be used. The recognition of the importance of changing people's responses has led to the development of "behavioural economics" in recent years, though many behavioural scientists would argue that basing policy proposals on an expectation of rationality alone has always been flawed. The development of behavioural economics[2] and increased understanding of human behaviour is an important aspect of policy development.

29. A policy must be implementable; in the case of regulation, enforceable, and many countries would also weigh the impact of a proposed policy against the cost whether that is a financial or potential detriment to business, the environment or a particular group of people.[3,4]

30. These points may seem to be an oversimplification or statement of the obvious but all too often a policy is implemented through legislation or otherwise, which is either unenforceable or unworkable or has unintended consequences — perhaps passed in reaction to a political crisis. Legislation can give the appearance of action being taken but the only real test is evidence from data as to how factors have

[2] Daniel Kahneman 25 October 2011. Thinking, Fast and Slow. Macmillan. ISBN 978-1-4299-6935-2.

[3] United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Better Regulation, Task Force, *Principles of Good Regulation* (London, Better Regulation Task Force, 2003). Available from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407162704/http:/archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/brc/upload/assets/www.brc.gov.uk/principlesleaflet.pdf.

[4] United Kingdom, Cabinet Office, *Better Policy-making: A Guide to Regulatory Impact Assessment* (London, Regulatory Impact Unit, 2003). Available from http://www.dei.gov.ba/bih_i_eu/RIA_u_BiH/default.aspx?id=6595&langTag=bs-3BA.

changed on the ground. Similarly, sometimes agreements are reached across boundaries, perhaps in an international context where the impact nationally is not fully appreciated either because of lack of data or weak national policy integration which leaves the national representative at a disadvantage in an international environment.

31. One further aspect of policy integration is the willingness to work with others on their problems. Sometimes this is directly beneficial, for example, when stemming the flow of illicit arms or drugs. On other occasions, it has less specific but nevertheless valuable benefits such as strengthening the process, building the basis for a specific trade-off or strengthening relationships so that when necessary, e.g., in the event of a crisis, the groundwork has been done and perspectives are understood.

Organizational structure

32. Before discussing the challenges of policy integration, it is worth considering the current structure of policy development. Traditionally, this has been arranged on a sectoral basis, e.g., education, finance, agriculture and security. Often each represents a ministerial portfolio. The vertical process of policy development may, or may not be, rigorous and robust. Political decision makers may not have expert knowledge of their sector — and arguably it should not be needed — but the public servants advising the decision maker should be in a position to gather evidence from all relevant parties, to consult concerning both problem definition and possible proposals and to offer workable options for resolving the issue as advice to the political decision maker.

33. Within many public administrations there are public servants whose job role is primarily that of policy development. They are skilled practitioners often with strong intellectual capability. This role transcends the original discipline they may have qualified in so that they provide rounded, balanced advice to their ministers. At one time the United Kingdom public service aimed for generalist policy staff. However, in the last 20 years or so, in response to the increasing complexity of the policy challenges, staff tend to be specialists in their subject area, e.g., in environmental matters, while at the same time are expected to have general policy skills enabling them to work with others across government.

34. Other public services tend to recruit and develop differently, some relying heavily on lawyers or on economists or specialists in public administration. The issue is not so much the underlying model but whether as a result of experience and training the staff advising decision makers gain the ability to effectively gather and interpret data, make the connections with other sectors and engage both the citizen and experts in exploring problems and possible solutions in such a way that demonstrates a policy process that is both fair and rigorous, resulting in sound advice.

35. The present paper is not advocating that a reorganization of government offices is necessary to achieve policy integration. A robust appraisal, however, of attitudes and skills (competencies) and of current working practices is required to establish whether they support or hinder efforts to achieve coherent policies across government and integration of proposals where beneficial.

Supporting implementation through effective institutions

36. The 2030 Agenda, while clearly stating high-level goals, does leave room for national and local variation. One would expect member countries to wish to be confident in their own policy development capability and those of each other — given the many interactions between policies in the current age. Some goals specifically reference the creation of policies or policy frameworks, e.g., goal 1 and goal 5. But the whole thrust of the resolution is about joint working while respecting the uniqueness and policy space of countries. These issues are mentioned specifically in Sustainable Development Goal 17.

37. The effectiveness of institutions is important because of the overarching vision created by the process and goals set out in the 2030 Agenda, further it is also important as a contributor to the achievement of national strategies, including internal prioritizing, international negotiating, and ability to respond to new information, new emergencies and challenges. Building skills, knowledge and robust systems in an inclusive environment ensures that issues are dealt with reasonably and fairly and strengthens preparedness and resilience for when times become challenging.

38. The Sustainable Development Goals create a set of goals and in some respects determine policies which generate an external set of parameters. The headlines and in some cases one might say the chapter headings, have been agreed at the highest level internationally. But now each Member State has to create the text in such a way that the story hangs together and is meaningful to local people while remaining consistent with the international story.

39. This is not entirely new. The world has addressed global issues successfully before, for example in efforts to reduce poverty. With the Sustainable Development Goal, however, the aspirations are high and wide-ranging, and countries will need to be in top form to deliver. The 2030 Agenda provides general guidance by setting some expectations with respect to governance.

40. Effective governance requires decision makers to exercise effective stewardship of public funds and resources, to be accountable for priorities selected, resources allocated and solutions implemented. Choices and decisions made should be subject to independent scrutiny.

Policy integration in action

41. Where policy integration exists it is likely to be the result of proactive effort to increase coherence over a period of years. This may have been stimulated and subsequently supported by groups working together either in a sector, for example, forestry or fishing, or in a community, such as the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or the International Maritime Organization. The international development community has been addressing the issue of policy cohesion for a number of years.[5] On occasion either at an international or national level, greater cohesion in policy may be the result of a

[5] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Building Blocks for Policy Coherence for Development* (Paris, 2009). Available from www.oecd.org/pcd/44704030.pdf.

response to an event or crisis. In all these cases some form of common goal, sense of shared enterprise or need for an agreed position is usually present.[6]

42. More broadly and in the absence of a compelling vision, policy development processes can be seen as on a continuum from entirely separate, through coordinated, cooperative to collaborative, i.e., integrated. Where a country is positioned on this continuum may be the result of an evolutionary response to events, crises, history, culture, or to proactive efforts to modernize and build effective institutions.

43. Some administrations will have well-established procedures for clearing "lines to take". For example, the Westminster Cabinet system, implies a process by which civil servants discuss and agree policy issues across and between departments and ministries prior to their reaching ministerial level. Civil servants supporting the Cabinet scrutinize proposals and check that the correct procedures have been followed and that appropriate consultations with relevant ministries have taken place. In this way, policy development was coordinated and overt conflicts in policy avoided.

44. At the same time, circumstances in countries may differ greatly. Even where similar nomenclature is used it cannot be assumed that the actual functioning of the policy advice and decision-making process are similar. A "cabinet" may exist in name only with civil servants in support dealing only with administrative matters such as timetabling rather than leading policy coordination. Top civil servants may not meet regularly to discuss policy and decision makers may base their decisions on very limited or non-existent information. Decisions taken may soon be found to contradict previous ones made by the same or different ministries; or to have resulted in expenditure that was not value for money for the citizen.

45. In the evolutionary model, with increased understanding of the complex interactions between issues, the focus shifted from coordination of already fairly established policy lines to more of a joint policymaking approach so that civil servants from a range of ministries would work together on policy challenges from a much earlier stage in the process (see E/C.16/2013/2).

46. For example, on the issue of illicit or dangerous drugs, one might expect the enforcement agencies to take a broadly similar view and the health and education agencies to take a different approach. In about the year 2000, the Minister for the Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom brought all the relevant parties together to share views and explore how they could work together to avoid developing conflicting policies.

47. It became clear that over the years a complex network of penalties, incentives and regulations had evolved, some based on research and robust evidence, others based more on what was assumed to be public perception and political will. In common with other policy challenges a concerted effort was made to examine these issues as a system, to map the linkages and to capture the impact at the front line, whether on the street or at the source of production. Thus, the focus shifted to cross-government working, policy integration and multi-stakeholder policy development. There was also an international dimension in as much as issues such as illicit trade in drugs, mass immigration or global warming cross international boundaries.

[6] European Union, *Panorama Inforegio: Reference Regional Policy, An Integrated Approach — A 360° view*, vol. 34 (Summer 2010).

48. The term "wicked" issues became widely used to reflect both the complexity and the difficulty of resolving long-standing problems and the emphasis shifted from simple cooperation to a more proactive collaborative effort to integrate policies and avoid conflicts in the relevant system. In the United Kingdom, for example in the late 1990s, the Cabinet Office was looking at how policy development could be modernized. At about the same time, the United Kingdom experienced the bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis and a strike by oil tanker drivers. These revealed that the policy development and implementation world was now much more complex and that delivery mechanisms in the commercial world had changed — they were no longer as assumed by the public servants or politicians.[7,8]

49. Improving policy development became an ongoing project so that 10 years later commentators were still suggesting that it could be better.[9] The fact that policy could be influenced by external bodies and influencers was already well understood but a change of political administration put far greater emphasis on the use of external policy development. It is too early to say but the expectation would be that this would mean an even higher level of analysis and integration skills would be required by advisers.[10] In the United Kingdom, the Cabinet Office now provides an online toolkit on policymaking which is available to all staff.[11]

IV. Challenges in achieving policy integration in support of the Sustainable Development Goals

50. The present paper focuses on policy integration in the context of successfully implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, or at least reaching a point where there are fewer policy conflicts and a measure of cohesion when policies are considered vertically or horizontally at the national and international levels.

51. The first and fundamental challenge is to ensure there is an effective policy development process in place and to achieve sufficient consistency of approach nationally to facilitate a country's problem solving, decision-making and resource allocation in accordance with effective governance. There is a useful model of policy development in the United Nations Environment Programme reference

[7] Helen Bullock, Juliet Mountford and Rebecca Stanley, United Kingdom Centre for Management and Policy Studies, *Better Policy-Making* (London, Cabinet Office, 2001).

[8] United Kingdom, National Audit Office, *Modern Policy-making: Ensuring Policies Deliver Value for Money* (London, Stationery Office, 2001). Available from www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2001/11/0102289.pdf.

[9] Michael Hallsworth and Jill Rutter, "Making policy better: improving Whitehall's core business" (London, Institute for Government, 2011). Available from www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Making%20Policy%20Better.pdf.

[10] Parliament of the United Kingdom, Public Administration Committee, *Public Engagement in Policy Making*: Written Evidence Submitted by the Cabinet Office (PE 11) (November 2012). Available from www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubadm/75/75we12.htm.

[11] United Kingdom, Cabinet Office, *Open Policy Making Toolkit* (London, Cabinet Office, 17 March 2015). Available from www.gov.uk/guidance/open-policy-making-toolkit#involve-public.

manual on integrated policymaking for sustainable development[12] and also in the United Kingdom Cabinet Office documents referenced above.

52. The purpose of the paper is not to propose specific models but to highlight some factors which may better enable achievement of the goals while respecting the policy space of each country. The one caveat proposed, however, is that leaving the policy space poorly equipped is likely only to increase risks nationally and internationally.

53. Even where concerted efforts have been made to work together across traditional policy and geographic boundaries the process has not been without its challenges. In 2004, Meijers and Stead[13] set out the challenges in policy integration and also differentiated between policy coordination and integration. Perhaps 10 years or more further on one of the most recent successful examples and one of the best documented is that of climate science and environmental issues more generally. There remain marked areas of difference yet progress has been made. It is perhaps helpful to reflect on the experience of implementing the Millennium Development Goals. United Nations conventions and other international agreements attest to the potential for reaching agreement and should be seen as a basis for moving forward.

54. A frequent theme to emerge is that integration relates to process[14] as well as to policy solutions, to the extent that integrating processes is fundamental to integrating policies. Countries with a range of approaches, an imbalance in the "authority" of different sectors or a culture of sectoral "silos" are more likely to find inclusive integration more difficult. Inclusiveness is integral to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, paragraph 35, "The new Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions."

Challenges

55. The challenges set out below may therefore be relevant to any country and are offered as a prompt to further thinking.

(a) Overlooked in some of the more academic work on policy integration is the potential for barriers to integration to exist because of gaps in infrastructure, including technology. A reliable and consistent power supply, transport infrastructure and other means of communication are vital to enable the gathering of data, the exchange of information, citizen engagement and the analysis and pooling of knowledge by policymakers and stakeholders. In countries with remote areas, proactive efforts may need to be made to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and also to ensure that accurate and timely data is available to policy developers.

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[12] United Nations Environment Programme. *Integrated Policy-making for Sustainable Development: A Reference Manual* (Geneva, August 2009). Available from www.unep.org/pdf/UNEP_IPSD_final.pdf.

[13] See footnote 2.

[14] See for example, "Policy coherence for inclusive and sustainable development", OECD Post-2015, Element 8, Paper 1 (2015).

(b) Established procedures for policy development, including problem definition, citizen engagement, evidence gathering and analysis, knowledge about implementation success and failures, etc., are not available. This can lead, for example, to solutions being implemented to problems that do not exist or are the "wrong" problem, to solutions put forward that are unworkable/do not solve the problem, cause a public backlash, or create even more serious problems in a related area.

(c) Absence of a shared vision or strategy, creates uncertainty, inhibits proactivity and can lead to multiple variations of what is "assumed" to be the overall aim of the government. While events can cause disturbance to plans and sometimes prompt unanticipated reactions, most countries have some sense of expected goals for the years ahead. Increasingly these goals are articulated in a vision or strategy document. Nevertheless, sometimes even where they exist, such documents are not "owned" by the public, or wider public service, resulting in the problems mentioned above. Properly developed strategies enable the preparation of realistic plans and develop understanding of barriers to implementation which in turn enable the assessment of the impact of integration of policies.

(d) In some countries, hierarchical structures and managerial approaches support territorialism in government, including a protectionist approach to policy. In a "top down" decision-making environment policymakers are unlikely to test the boundaries of their responsibility, potentially resulting in gaps in the system which are not a problem for the policymaker but will be experienced by the citizen as contradictions or conflicts.

(e) Key information is not available, not reliable, or not consistent internally or in relation to other countries, making it extremely difficult to analyse problems and to track progress. This may occur because the information has never been collected or because access is restricted. Public servants in some countries will have access to databases of all sectors, others will have access to only a limited number and in many countries reliable data is simply not collected and made available to policy developers.

(f) Links between policy levers and policy impacts are not fully understood, that is to say, there are doubts about the reliability of evidence about how to achieve results. It is vital to track and understand the real causes of issues in a particular set of circumstances and to develop an understanding of what regulations, incentives, etc., will make a difference to behaviour. For this reason, it is often important for people to meet to pool knowledge and information with a view to clarifying what the problem is well before trying to generate possible solutions. Such activity also builds a coalition of interested parties involved in achieving the potentially positive policy outcome which in turn facilitates implementation.

(g) Coordination across government is not an established way of working. This can lead to conflicting policies and increase the risk of unintended consequences where, for example, a set of policies combined have a much more damaging effect than any one of them would have been expected to have. It is also likely to mean that the individuals leading policy development are more territorial and concerned with protecting what they perceive as being their area of responsibility.

(h) Funding is not transparent and is not "outcome" related; that is to say funding is not tied to the successful resolution of the policy challenge. In many cases funding is still based on covering the overheads of the public service rather than on delivery of specific outcomes. On occasion a preferred solution may be presented as a policy solution when it is really just activity, and often a cost, for example in the building of a new railway. The answer to the question "Why?" must be clear and capable of evaluation, for example "to enable more people to work in 'X' town" or "to strengthen economic productivity in 'Y' sector".

(i) Accountability mechanisms have not kept pace with policy development approaches. For example, several ministries or other actors are involved in delivering a solution but only one is subject to independent scrutiny. This reinforces the sectoral divisions whereas making accounting officers jointly responsible for an outcome sends a strongly supportive message with regard to joint working.

(j) Marked differences exist as to priorities, and possible solutions, for example a need to reduce government expenditure and a commitment to ensuring that people have access to health care and education. Many such conflicts can be addressed by looking to a deeper level of the issue, such as enabling more people to earn a living through work and the Sustainable Development Goals reflect this. But different parts of government can initially see the problem as insurmountable. Differences can occur between sectors, between regions and between local and national perspectives.

(k) Too great a focus on "my" issues rather than an appreciation that joint working can usefully resolve wider issues for the benefit of all involved.

(l) Conflict exists possibly between different areas of expertise, between stakeholders or within government. Research can be contradictory as can professional and academic advice. Ultimately, the policy developers need to use judgement to recommend proposals and the decision makers will do the same but they have a right to be informed as to the differences in view and potential risks of any option.

(m) Lack of trust within government, for example between ministries or by stakeholders or the public. This may result for example in lack of participation, withholding information or poor compliance rates.

(n) Weak subject knowledge, data availability or policy development processes make problem resolution difficult and/or make integration more challenging.

(o) Short-term issues gain political priority and resources at the expense of the achievement of longer-term goals.

V. Addressing the challenges and achieving integration

Leadership roles

56. There are key players, each with a role to fulfil in ensuring that the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals are met and that as a fundamental engine of success, policy integration is effective.

57. Ultimately decision makers themselves need to require an integrated approach from their advisers; to insist on it in their decision-making processes and to reject proposals which do not demonstrate a rigorous and inclusive approach to policy development. Their leadership behaviour will demonstrate their commitment to effective policy development and integration and encourage public servants and other advisers to ensure that they have complied with the expectations of decision makers.

58. Public servants, particularly their willingness and ability to collaborate with each other in the interests of citizens, are the implementers of policy integration. But in order to work beyond the vertical lines of accountability they need the leadership and support of decision makers in ensuring that clear expectations are set in relation to, for example, regular cross-government meetings, citizen engagement, joint working and financial management and joint reporting.

59. Policy integration usually means taking longer in preparing for a decision and it may mean additional cost for meetings and consultation but the main hurdle is mindset. With determination, problems encountered in collaboration, such as conflicting legal frameworks, can often be overcome. This means that there should be scope for countries with low or limited resources to implement integration. There are, however, specific areas in the policy development process such as access to national and international data which are resource intensive especially at start up.

60. Those responsible for initiating plans and policy proposals have a particular responsibility to demonstrate effective policy development and to call for integration. They could require cross-government engagement, local engagement and citizen engagement, rejecting proposals that do not demonstrate alignment with the inclusive approach of the Sustainable Development Goals.

61. While recognizing the ongoing need for audit and evaluation of specific policies, independent auditors, researchers, professional bodies and relevant civil society organizations can look at inter-relationships and linkages across government; this should help to ensure that the effectiveness of policies are reviewed within a recognizable system and that unexpected consequences are identified and dealt with.

62. Those with responsibility for the selection and development of staff and for organizational development play a particular role in supporting new approaches and the acquisition of knowledge and skills in this area. They can also advise on appropriate mechanisms to encourage collaboration across traditional boundaries, in some cases taking the lead in facilitating early meetings and workshops, supporting them until the new approach becomes established.

63. All of the above require an appreciation and acceptance of the transformative agenda — the Sustainable Development Goals are ambitious and are intended to bring about changes to the current situation, in many countries and for many issues, this means that real and substantive change in policy and approaches are required. Professor Meredith Edwards sums it up in this way: "Transformation is a fundamental or complete change; a big shift in the ways things are done by individuals, organizations and the wider society. In governance terms it would

involve a transformation in process, structure and lines of authority on where decision-making power lies."[15]

Key features of successful policy integration

64. Subject to circumstance, the following observations may assist in developing policy integration:

(a) Establishing a shared understanding of the issue/problem, especially when the issue is recognized as compelling. This will include bringing together people and data from a wide range of backgrounds for analysis and discussion in order to distil the key issues to be addressed. It can be difficult and time consuming but in the long run builds an invaluable coalition of support.

(b) Paying attention to collaboratively developing the process of integration as well as the actual policies. As a foundation for future integration, encouraging policy developers across sectors to share approaches and agree processes is essential. This does not prevent specialization but ensures consistency of standards as would be expected and is found in industry, for example.

(c) Clarity of long-term direction is vital but within that vision short-term problem solving in measurable steps will provide both incentive and learning that enables further progress to be more effective.

(d) Developing clear goals which are SMART. A realistic self-evaluation of the current situation enables goals and targets to be set which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-specific.[16] Developing strategic statements can sometimes lead people to assume a straight line progression from the current state to the desired state. In practice preparatory work often needs to be done. Changes to legislation and policy take time so the progress graph is slow at first, sometimes showing a poorer performance but then moves more rapidly as barriers to progress are removed or overcome.[17]

(e) Ensuring that the necessary infrastructure, technology and permissions are in place to facilitate collaborative working and citizen engagement.

(f) Building a dynamic approach to addressing policy challenges which identifies synergies and trade-offs and which learns from feedback in the system and is capable of responding to new events. Learning and experimentation take place alongside monitoring and evaluation.

(g) The ongoing development of cross-cutting organizational systems and ways of working, coalition building and knowledge-sharing.

(h) A proactive approach to change which embraces preventive strategies ensuring enablers are in place and barriers to progress mitigated.

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[15] Meredith Edwards, *Transformative governance for sustainable capacity development*, NUM Leadership Conference on Capacity Development for Transformation (Ulaan Baatar, September 2014).

[16] Peter F. Drucker, *The Practice of Management* (New York, Harper and Row, 1954).

[17] See for example, Ray Shostac, "The experience of the delivery unit and lessons learned from Latin America", presentation prepared for the World Bank regional conference on improving public sector performance in Latin America and the Caribbean, Washington, D.C., December 2011. Available from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTLACREGTOPPUBSECGOV/Resources/LACMIC_Ray_Shostak_UK.pdf.

(i) Bringing together local delivery actors with central policy developers, and approaching policy outcomes from the citizen's perspective, which will mean multiple-stakeholder perspectives.

(j) Focusing on problem solving not rule following, enabling curiosity, experimentation and variation.

(k) Developing in-depth sectoral expertise as a foundation for a multi-sectoral approach.

(l) Technical assistance geared to supporting policy integration. Donors may need to self-evaluate to ensure that they themselves are working in an integrated way and that they avoid reinforcing sectoral boundaries by failing to encourage multisectoral, multi-stakeholder approaches.

(m) 360-degree working, ensuring strong vertical and horizontal connections that are thematically or geographically based, as appropriate.

(n) Ensuring that there is funding tied to stated objectives or outcomes.

(o) Reinforcing collaborative working and joint responsibility through ensuring accountability for results, including independent review such as by the Supreme Audit Institutions.

Enabling actions

65. The enabling actions are as follows:

(a) Develop the capacity to effectively conduct a realistic self-evaluation of policy development capability and levels of integration. This could be supported by the United Nations system, by advice from the Committee, working with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and by donors.

(b) Conduct awareness-raising seminars, briefing and training, dependent upon the appropriate level of detail for the target audience, on the policy development process, particularly evidence-based policy and citizen engagement, on policy integration and on collaborative working, including vertically, e.g., local to national horizontal, cross-government and international. This would include decision makers and advisers and implementers from the public service and other sectors.

(c) Introduce new organizational approaches incorporating, for example, thematic cross-government meetings and events, topic-based events with specific groups of stakeholders, and citizen consultations and engagement.

(d) Conduct expert events focused on sharing experience and evidence in relation to specific Sustainable Development Goals or groups of Sustainable Development Goals, sponsored by key decision makers.

(e) Organize specific capacity-building, for example, on leadership development, systems thinking, data gathering and analysis, collaborative working, citizen engagement, and delegation and empowerment of public servants within a framework of responsibility and accountability.

(f) Establish clear parameters for policy proposals to be presented to decision makers, which demonstrate integration, showing evidence, consultation, costs and implementation mechanisms.

(g) The Sustainable Development Goals, particularly goal 17, provide an established reminder of longer-term goals when short-term solutions threaten to deplete resources.

(h) Establish a menu of support and incentive mechanisms for collaborative working and joint responsibility such as joint reporting, reports to elected politicians and to the relevant sponsor.

(i) Share data sets and research evidence. For example, the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration is developing a digital platform that will serve as a research and advisory tool for public administration professionals and which will enable countries to access data about specific topics, approaches, results and outcomes.

(j) Strengthen governance so that people are operating within a common framework and have confidence in the process.

VI. Conclusion

66. Policy integration as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda is a collaborative, inclusive process with an acceptance of both horizontal and vertical integration such that choices are made which reflect local aspirations, as well as national and international contexts, and are coherent within and across sectors.

67. Policy integration remains, however, surprisingly difficult to achieve as has been found by countries with well-developed policy-formulation experience. Policy-formulation skills are largely unseen by the general public but policy incoherence is often the reason for what the citizen perceives as obstacles and inconsistencies in a government's approach, whether it is in relation to services that directly affect them or in broader areas of policy and decision-making.

68. Working collaboratively towards integration is clearly possible per se and unskilled policy advisers might even enjoy the process of "putting the world to rights". More is expected, however, from those responsible for allocating public funds and in-depth policy skills are required in order to have real confidence in policy proposals. Depth of understanding of both policy process and topic area, and local and national variation in circumstances and priorities, are essential requisites for the public policy adviser.

69. Therefore, strengthening policy development skills, where necessary, is arguably essential to successful integration. In addition to addressing personal skills, this may entail ensuring that enabling actions are taken, such as dealing with infrastructure issues, organizational design and leadership development.

70. Where policy development capability is already strong, policy integration can still be difficult because it cuts across established boundaries. This is less of a problem where the culture is essentially collaborative but is a real challenge in a more hierarchical system of government. Leadership will make the difference by setting a strongly positive example; by encouraging collaborative working, by investing in capacity development, by rejecting less than satisfactory policy

proposals and/or proposals where stakeholder engagement is lacking, by embracing transparency and by taking an inclusive approach to policy development.

71. Practical support can be offered in those areas where individual countries do not have the resources to go it alone but where together with others, advances could be made, e.g., in accessing data. Some may need support on a country basis; for example, with data collection, which has strong links with e-government solutions.

72. Donors, professional bodies, academia, etc., can all play a part in directing their efforts in support of the building blocks required in each set of circumstances.

73. Audit and other independent observers or international bodies can set standards and challenge and/or support their clients to deepen their skills and enhance expertise in both policymaking and the process of integration.

74. Essential building blocks to this level of integration are an effective and consistent policy-development process, a proactive approach to building the approaches which will sustain policy integration and establishing the infrastructure whether physical or technology-based that will enable integration.

75. In planning to reach a particular destination, a good sense of the start point and what the journey might enta is required. These will vary from country to country so the ability to self-assess and then to build the capability required is essential. One, non-directive support mechanism could be the development of a self-evaluation model which poses a series of questions distilled from Committee reports and other relevant documents and publications.

76. Day-to-day organizational approaches will, and should, vary according to circumstance. The observations on what is required to make policy integration successful indicate that a major challenge is making the shift from "knowing to doing", that is to say in the translation of good intentions into practice in the policy-development field. The United Nations system and donors are in a unique position to reinforce the integration process through their own approaches and by ensuring that support is targeted to the integration efforts. As is recognized in the 2030 Agenda, in order to turn the Sustainable Development Goals into reality requires closer integration of policy, which in turn requires expertise, access to evidence, commitment and resolve to work collaboratively.